

FAMILYSEARCH RESEARCH WIKI

Researching on the Wiki

I. Introduction

The Wiki is a compilation of resources available to the genealogy researcher. Ideally, it provides the researcher with information and the best resources, along with a synopsis of those resources, available for their area of interest. The Wiki is not a repository for names or family histories

II. Parts of the Wiki

A. The United States

There is a page for the United States, a page for each state, and each county or parish within that state. There also may be city or town pages if there are areas where those are pertinent. In addition, there are topic pages for each state covering a wide variety of topics including African Americans, Bible Records, Immigration, Gazetteers, Military Records, Societies, etc.

B. Historical Records Pages

C. Indians of North America Project

A comprehensive project containing much information and covering all of the United States.

D. England/British Pages

Extensively developed pages of both county and parish records.

III. Foreign Wikis

The foreign language Wikis are in the early development stages. Each of these will have their own teams working on them and maintaining them. Currently, there are 10 in process:

Chinese

English

French

German

Italian

Japanese

Korean

Portuguese

Russian

Spanish

Swedish

IV. Wiki Tools

- A. Searching
- B. Watching Pages
- C. Preferences
- D. User Page
- E. What Links Here
- F. Research Forums
- G. Discussion/Talk pages
- H. Getting Help (For the Trainer)

A. SEARCHING

- **Keywords**, Search the FamilySearch Wiki the same way you would search Wikipedia, by keywords like DAR or Daughters of the American Revolution.
- **Not Phrases**, You will not receive the best results if your searches include phrases like "How do I find records for the DAR." Phrases can be used to search both Google and Yahoo but the Wiki search engine is not designed for this type of search.
- Enter the **place**, **subject**, **record type** or the **name of the article** in the search box. (Family names and information on specific families are not found on the FamilySearch Wiki. Go to [FamilySearch](#) to look for your deceased family members. Go to Forums to ask questions about your family history research.) The FamilySearch Wiki search engine locates the keywords in Wiki article headings, titles, and in the content of the article. The resulting articles may contain one or all of the keywords searched. Articles containing the keywords many times throughout the article will rank higher in the search results than those that contain the search terms once or twice.

Basic Search Tips

1. Searching for a specific article in the FamilySearch Wiki is relatively simple if you know the exact title. If you don't know the exact title, search for words that appear in the title or body of the article.
2. If you don't know the title of a wiki article, search for a topic or category.
 - (a) At the bottom of every article there should be a category. Click the category name to see a list of all articles in that category.
 - (b) Search the list of articles in the category for similar or related articles

Advanced Search Tips

1. Use terms "AND," "OR," and "-" (the hyphen for NOT) to help define a search (this is called a boolean search).
2. Parenthesis control word order in searches.
3. Asterisks and question marks can fill in missing or unknown characters.
4. Quotation marks group words or phrases together.

Search Strategies

1. Think about what you want to find out about an ancestor. Think about word variations that may be used to describe that type of record. For example, if you want to locate a birth record, this may also appear under the headings "Vital Records" or "Civil Registration."
2. Second, consider the location where that event may have happened. If you don't have a specific locality, start big. Even searching under "United States Birth" may give you hints on trying to narrow down your search.
3. If the search results do not help you locate what you need to learn about an ancestor, think about other records that may possibly contain the information you want to learn. For example, a death record may contain an ancestor's birth date and place to make it easier to locate the ancestor's parents or other helpful information.
4. In general, it is easier to begin looking for records that were created later in an ancestor's life and work backward rather than the other way around. For example, before searching for a birth or marriage record, first try to locate a death record, obituary, or census records that list an ancestor.
5. There should be many records available that contain information about an ancestor. Think about the record trail that you leave behind, and use that as a guide to help you imagine records that may exist for an ancestor. For example: you were born, attended school, competed in a science fair and had your picture added in the newspaper, appear three times in the yearbook, went to college, signed up for a phone and appeared in the phone book, got a traffic ticket while taking your final exams, got engaged, posted the engagement in the newspaper, broke off the engagement, joined an organization or club, ran in a 5K, bought a house, voted, bought insurance, went to the hospital with a sprained wrist, paid income taxes, had jury duty for a court case, appeared as a witness to a wedding, created a home business and had to pay personal property taxes, lost a family member to death and spoke at the funeral or appeared as a pall bearer in the funeral program, attended a city council meeting to request a change in the speed limit in front of your house . . . Each of these events create a record. Ancestors also interacted with the community around them, and created records throughout their lives.

B. Watching Pages

The Wiki has a collection of special pages and tools to keep track of what is going on. You can watch for example:

- recent changes to all pages
- the revision history: all changes made to one page
- the contributions of one specific user
- newly created pages

To monitor recent changes to all pages, you go to Special Pages and choose “[Recent Changes](#).” This displays all edits, file uploads, page moves, deletions and other actions done in the wiki.

In the menu on top it offers a collection of links to customize your display: limit the number of changes shown, the number of days or restrict it to edits to a certain namespace. You can also hide edits marked as minor (don't forget that major changes can be flagged by a user as minor anyway).

One line in recent changes consists of several links:

- ***diff*** displays the difference to the previous revision of the page,
- ***hist*** links to the revision history of the page,
- the link with the full title of the page brings you to the current version. If the title is in bold, it indicates that it is on your [watchlist](#).
- Next is a flag describing the article modification type:
 - ***N*** signals a new page,
 - ***m*** a minor edit,
 - ***b*** an edit made by a bot.

Following the timestamp is a number within parentheses with a + or -. This refers to the number of bytes that have been added or removed. Next, the user is mentioned with a link to their [user page](#) and their [talk page](#) or to their contributions (in the case of anonymous users).

Last, there is an edit summary, appearing in italics, if the user submitted one when they made the edit.

C. PREFERENCES

User profile

- *Username*: Your user name. Only administrators can change your username.
- *User ID*: A number assigned to your account when you created it (for example, if your number is 42 you are the 42nd user to sign up at this particular wiki). This number is used for internal purposes.
- *Number of edits*: How many edits you have made. Not all wikis will have this.
- *Real name*: If provided, this will be used for attribution (rather than using your username). Providing your real name is entirely optional. Some wikis do not have this option.
- *E-mail*: Your email address, if you have supplied one. You can also change or remove your address here.
- *Nickname*: When you sign your name (using ~~~~), what you enter here will be used at the start instead of a simple link to your user page. By default, anything you enter here will be wrapped with[[]]; if you want to use special linking, enable *Raw signatures (without automatic link)*.
- *Language*: This controls what language the interface is displayed in. The default interface includes localizations for all supported languages, but this is not necessarily the case with extensions or custom skins. Page text will **not** be translated, nor will templates (unless the templates integrate text localization).

Change password

To change your password, enter your old password in the first box and your new password in the last two. If you want this site to remember your login, check *Remember my login on this computer*. Note that this function requires you to have cookies enabled in your browser, and if your cookie is cleared or expires you will no longer be remembered.

E-mail

If you have supplied an email address, you will need to click the *verify address* button in order to use these functions. You will receive an email; simply open it and follow the link to enable the following functions.

- *E-mail me when a page I'm watching is changed*
- *E-mail me when my user talk page is changed*
- *E-mail me also for minor edits of pages*
- *Enable e-mail from other users*
- *Send me copies of emails I send to other users*

Languages

From your preferences you can select what language you would like the interface to be in. Only the buttons like 'edit' and 'talk', in addition to a few pages in the sidebar, will be affected. The main text of the pages will not be changed by this for the vast majority of pages, although there are a few pages where it will, like some in the Wikimedia Meta Wiki.

Skin

Here you can choose the skin you want to use (use *Preview* if you want to see a skin before you choose it). By default, FamilySearchWiki includes the following skins:

- Classic
- FamilySearchWiki (default)
- FamilySearchWikiTest1
- FamilySearchWikiTest2
- MonoBook
- Simple

While you can choose whatever skin you like, bear in mind that some wikis will incorporate templates or layout elements that will not display as intended in some of these skins. Generally speaking, sticking with whatever the wiki's default skin is will ensure you see pages as intended.

Files

Here you can determine how images will be displayed. Images displayed by direct pasting of a URL (if the wiki has it enabled) will not be affected by this setting.

- *Limit images on image description pages to:* This setting lets you choose how big image previews will be on the Image: pages. If you know what your current screen resolution is you may like to set this to one or two sizes smaller than your own screen. If you have a slow connection (such as dial-up) you may want to limit them to 320×240.
- *Thumbnail size:* Define how big you want thumbnails to appear. This setting will not affect thumbnails with dimensions determined by an editor, nor can it increase images beyond their original dimensions.

Date and time

The following is normally rendered depending on preferences:

```
[[2001-01-05]] (or [[2001]]-[[01-05]]) (with leading zeros)
[[2001]] [[January 5]] ([[2001]] [[January 05]])
[[January 5]], [[2001]] ([[January 05]], [[2001]])
[[5 January]] [[2001]] ([[05 January]] [[2001]])
[[January 5]] ([[January 05]])
[[5 January]] ([[05 January]])
```

Editing

Settings to control editing pages, including the size of the edit box displayed and whether to watch pages that you have edited or created automatically.

Recent changes

- *Days to show in recent changes*: Here you can specify how far back the [recent changes](#) pages will go. Note that the list will stop prematurely if the number of edits is exceeded (see below)
- *Number of edits to show in recent changes*: Here you can specify how many edits should be displayed.
- *Hide minor edits in recent changes*: This enables you to hide edits marked as minor (see [Help:Editing pages](#)). Since some users will rapidly make a lot of tiny tweaks to update templates or fix spelling errors you may find enabling this to be useful. You can also turn this on temporarily from the recent changes page (see [Help:Tracking changes](#)).
- *Enhanced recent changes (JavaScript)*: Enhanced recent changes condenses edits into a per-page list. As indicated, this requires JavaScript to be enabled. See [Help:Tracking changes](#) for more information on this feature.

Watchlist

Setting to control the behavior of the watchlist. Most of these options are also available on the watchlist display itself, but by setting them in your preferences you control the default behavior, i.e. Every time you visit the watchlist it will do the same.

Search

Default settings for searches including how many results to display and how much context to show for each result. Check the boxes next to the namespaces which you want to show up, the first time that you search for something. You can override this when doing an actual search, by checking or unchecking the boxes at the bottom of the search results screen.

Misc

Other settings such as numbering and justification.

D. USER PAGE

A **user page** is a page about a wiki user, someone who registered on the wiki and is (most probably) a contributor. If you have registered, you can create your own user page. Your user page is linked at the top of the **Personal tools** section of the menu bar. More importantly, others will see links to your user page from various places which assist wiki collaboration. They include the 'Recent changes' and page 'history' displays. You can also link to your user page within text of a wiki page, which is mainly useful on talk pages when you sign your name.

Creating your user page

This will help other users and contributors learn about you and your interest in family history.

1. Using the navigation menu on the right side of the page, expand **Personal Tools** by clicking on the arrow out to the right.
2. The first item you see under **Personal Tools** should be your username. Click on this, and it will take you to your user page.
3. Before you make your first edit to your user page, a message will display there saying "This page has not been created yet." Do not let that confuse you; just click on **Edit This Page** and begin typing.

What to put on your user page

User pages are just as flexible as any other wiki page, and your user page is a page all about you, so generally people will leave you to freely write your user page in whatever format you like. Think of it as a 'profile' page. It's a feature that's in the wiki for the purpose of helping other people know who a contributor is and of bringing the online community closer together. You might like to mention where you are from and what your job is. You can also state what your main areas of interest are in relation to the topic of the wiki and describe contributions you have made or areas where you are interested in contributing.

Userboxes

Many users share with others their language skills and/or other interests by displaying [Userboxes](#) on their user page.

User scratchpad/development area

You can use your user page as a scratchpad, an area for developing ideas without cluttering the main namespace. Create your own user sandbox. You may find it useful as a working area you can use before making edits to articles in the main namespace.

Helping others find you

If you are involved in a community where individuals know your full name and would like to help others find your user page by searching on your name, you can create a new page with the title of your full

name, then create a redirect to your user page. This will bring your user page up first in the search results if other users search on your name.

Other people's user pages

As mentioned above, you will see links to other people's user pages in various places throughout the wiki.

User Contributions

When viewing another person's user page, an additional link, "*user contributions*", appears in the 'toolbox' area (bottom right). This takes you to a list of all of this user's wiki edits. Use this to get an idea of how prolific a contributor somebody is or to track down edits made by a user who is causing trouble/making bad wiki edits.

Editing someone else's page

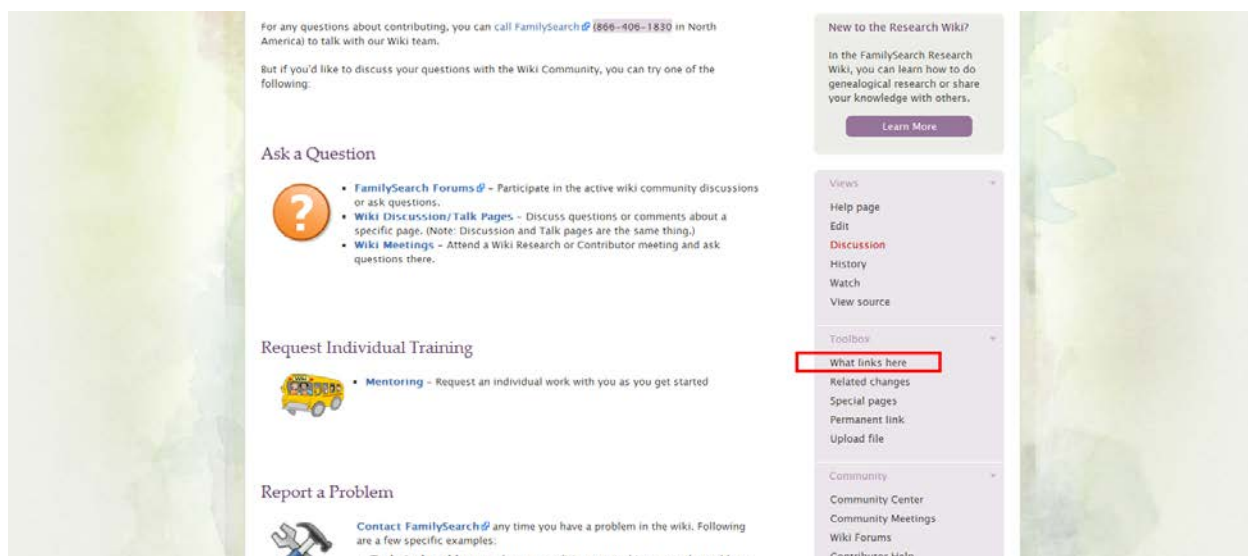
It's generally considered bad etiquette to rewrite or reword another person's user page. Editing is not disallowed, but you should avoid adding information (or especially opinions) which might be misinterpreted as coming from that user in situations where this could potentially cause a problem. Some types of edits are widely acceptable and unlikely to cause any problems:

- Fixing wiki links when a page has been moved or deleted
- Fixing broken external links
- Categorizing or fixing categories of user pages.

User talk pages

Every user page has an associated talk page; a "user talk page". This is a special kind of talk page for leaving messages directed to a particular user.

E. WHAT LINKS HERE



This is the first selection under the Toolbox heading on the right side navigational menu. This feature can prove to be a valuable research resource by suggesting pages that might not readily come to mind. Clicking on this option generates a hyperlinked list of every page in the Wiki that is linked in any way to the page you are currently on.

F. RESEARCH FORUMS

While not actually a part of the Research Wiki, you can communicate with the Support Team, as well as other members of the Wiki Team, on the four Wiki threads on the [Research Forums](#).

1. [Wiki Trainers](#) ~ This forum is especially for FHC Trainers and is a place to post questions or discuss issues concerning working with the Wiki.

2. [Contributors Corner](#) ~ This forum is the place that new ideas for the Wiki, as well as changes being considered, are discussed.
3. [Contributor Help](#) ~ This forum is much like the Wiki Trainers forum, but for general Wiki users. It is ok to post your general help questions in this forum if you would like to, but we recommend using the Trainer's forum.
4. [WikiProjects](#) ~ This forum is the place ongoing projects are discussed.

G. DISCUSSION/TALK PAGES

Every page has an associated Discussion or Talk page which can be used for discussion and communicating with other users. For example, an article on London birth records will have a discussion page where Wiki users might make suggestions for improving the article or call into question the article's accuracy.

How to add your comments to a discussion page.

1. Make sure you have registered and signed-on to the Wiki so you can have rights to edit the discussion page
2. Click the the **Discussion** tab at the top of the page on which you want to add your comments.
3. Click the **+** tab at the top of the page.
4. In the *Heading/subject* field, give a title to your discussion point.
5. Add your comments to the discussion page by typing in the editing box.
6. When you are finished adding your discussion point, scroll to the bottom of the page and click the **Save Page** button.

Technical note: A discussion page is actually very similar to any other wiki page, but it is in the 'talk' namespace, to keep it separate from the articles in the 'main' namespace. As with any wiki page, you can edit it, link to it, and view the editing history.

Editing conventions on talk pages

- Always sign your name after your comments. Use the four tildes '~~~~' wiki syntax (or the toolbar button)
- Start a new discussion with a ==level 2 heading== at the bottom of the page (or use the '+' tab)
- Indent replies with colons (':') at the beginning of the line.

Editing discussions

Having discussions on a free-form wiki page will seem strange at first. It has some advantages over the conventional rigid forum format, but it can get a little messy. As with other wiki pages, anyone can help with tidying up discussions, to conform to the editing conventions e.g. add signatures and headings where they are missing.

Clearly we also have the opportunity to edit other people's comments. It is generally bad etiquette to modify somebody else's wording (Better to just add your own comment with your corrections) But it can be acceptable to...

Modify discussion headings

Change wording or append words to the discussion headings, to better describe the topic of discussion. Note that good descriptive headings become important when many discussions start to fill the page.

Move discussions to a different page

If discussions are put in the wrong place on the wiki, and are better associated with different talk page, then you could just move the discussion by cut & paste. This is potentially confusing, for the people posting, but can be important for keeping things tidy. You could leave the discussion in the wrong place for a few days/weeks grace period before tidying it. You could leave a link behind explaining that a discussion was moved, or if not, you should link within the edit summary.

Split a post into several discussions

It may be appropriate to do this, if somebody has raised several points which need to be answered separately. However you should always be respectful to other people's words. Does their post still make sense if you split it up?

Building articles - Discussing articles

It is usually best to keep focused on the task of building a wiki article, and use discussion pages only to support this process. The topic of conversation should generally revolve around what needs to be done to make the associated article better. Remember that editing the article itself is often a more effective means of communicating. It can be more difficult, requiring you to balance your views alongside those of others, but it can also be more rewarding. This is how the community of wiki editors will make progress. Often it will feel more natural to engage in heated debate on a talk page (or indeed any other contact channel) but in fact the wiki article itself can offer a powerful means of reaching middle-ground. Think about how to portray both sides of the argument (e.g. listing advantages and disadvantages) and you may find the debate evaporates.

User Talk pages

A "user talk page" is a place where you can leave a message for a specific wiki contributor. The user talk page is associated with their "user page" (see [Help:User page](#)).

The contributor will see a note at the top of every wiki page when they have received a message. They may be notified by email as well, although this cannot always be relied upon (since the email notification feature must be activated by supplying a valid email address, and clicking a confirmation link).

You can leave a message inviting the contributor into a discussion in the where more contributors gather.

If you don't get a response to your user talk page message, try looking for other contact details which they may have supplied on their user page.

Note that the messages are not private, and others can join in the conversation.

H. GETTING HELP

There are several options for the Wiki Trainer to obtain answers to their questions.

5. Call Wiki Support 866-406-1830, #3. There is a missionary from the Support Team available from 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. Monday through Friday. This is the fastest way to get a question answered in the event a you are working with a patron or in need of immediate assistance.
6. Ask a question on the Wiki Trainer Skype chat. The members of the Support Team who are working with FHCs monitor this chat during weekdays from approximately 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. In addition, other Wiki Trainers may be active on the chat.

7. Post a question on the Wiki Trainer thread on the Research Forums. This thread was created especially for the FHC Wiki Trainers, and the Support Team will also monitor it. We hope to eventually have active discussion dialogue between Wiki Trainers on this thread to share ideas, discuss issues, etc.